

## Did You Know....?

By Clem Dougherty

...that but for the occurrence of a “miracle” on March 19, 1770, the Spanish would have abandoned their colonization of California and returned to Mexico without founding the missions, the presidios, and the pueblos? At our last newsletter we left Portola and his party retuning to San Diego unsure as to whether they had discovered Monterey Bay. Serra who had remained at San Diego was unhappy with Portola and urged an immediate return up the California coast to locate Monterey Bay. Portola agreed. But first, Portola had to address the situation in San Diego which could be described only as desperate. While Portola was in the north looking for Monterey Bay, the local Indians attacked Serra’s encampment at San Diego and killed one of Serra’s companions and wounded three others. Morale among the Spanish was at an all-time low. The supply of food was rapidly diminishing, and abandonment of the entire enterprise seemed a very real possibility. Portola announced that if no relief in the form of the ships San Antonio or San Jose returned from Mexico with supplies by March 19, 1770, the feast of St. Joseph, the patron of the Sacred Expedition, they would all return to Baja. Serra began praying to St. Joseph, and on March 19, 1770, the feast of St. Joseph, the San Antonio was sighted on the horizon. The Sacred Expedition was saved. In Serra’s eyes, a “miracle” had occurred.



**Carmel Mission**

The Spanish now having been revived, Portola then sent Serra, Costanzo, and Fages on the San Antonio to sail by sea up to Monterey, and Portola with 12 soldiers proceeded once again by land to Monterey over the same route he had travelled on the first attempt. Upon both Serra reaching Monterey by sea and Portola reaching Monterey by land and reviewing the earlier Vizcaino map, they now decided that they had indeed found Monterey at the place it now occupies. The presidio and then the nearby mission San

Carlos Borromeo (Carmel Mission) were formerly established on June 3, 1770. Monterey was established as the capital of California where the Spanish Governors resided. Mission San Carlos Borromeo (Carmel) became the headquarters of the missions where Serra as the first Father President of the missions and later his successors resided.

Upon leaving Pedro Fages in charge of the new government at Monterey, Portola then sailed for Mexico where upon his arrival in Mexico City there was great rejoicing over the establishment of the new province in California. Portola never came back to Alta California. He later returned to Spain where he died in 1786. At Lerida in Catalonia, Spain, Portola was buried in the Church of San Francisco, the namesake of the great bay, some six thousand miles away, that he had discovered.

(Sources: Rawls and Bean: California, An Interpretive History, 9th ed., pp. 36-39; Carner-Ribalta: Gaspar De Portola, Explorer of California, pp.153-155;185-191; Douglas Kyle.Ed.: Historic Spots in California, 4th ed., pp.4-5;174;214;334;368-369)